

## Unit 2B Why did Jesus tell stories?

### ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children learn about stories from the gospels. Children will be asked to draw on their own experience and understanding of storytelling and story-writing. They learn about how important it was for Jesus to tell stories as a means of teaching about God.

### WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit builds on children's knowledge of Christianity from the units in year 1 on belonging, Christmas and a visit to a church. It lays some foundations for the year 3 units 'What do we know about Jesus?' (3C) and 'What is the Bible and why is it important for Christians?' (3D).

This unit helps to develop literacy.

### PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- an understanding of who Jesus is and know some stories concerning his life

### VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- the Bible, *eg Bible, parable, God*
- specific stories, *eg shepherd, pharisee, tax collector*
- feelings, *eg forgiveness, reconciliation, jealousy, repentance, humility, caring, loving*
- literacy, *eg author, illustrator, publisher, contents*

### RESOURCES

- examples of different versions of the parables being studied, *eg different translations of the Bible, children's Bibles, picture/story books*

### EXPECTATIONS

#### At the end of this unit

*most children will:*

know that Jesus told stories as a way of teaching people about God and how they should behave; know and retell some well-known parables of Jesus and explain their meaning; explain why characters in the stories might respond or behave in different ways, depending on their point of view

*some children will not have made so much progress and will:*

know that Jesus told stories; know and retell some well-known parables

*some children will have progressed further and will:*

show understanding of how the feelings in the stories relate to Christian beliefs about God; understand why stories can teach moral and spiritual values

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

## POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

### WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

- that Jesus told stories
  - that the stories Jesus told were a way of teaching people about God, how to behave, and how to treat each other
  - that storytelling is a common human activity
  - that stories often contain inner meanings and messages
  - the story of the prodigal son
  - to respond sensitively to the feelings and experiences of others
  - begin to understand the meaning of the parable
- Begin a story with the words 'once upon a time', then stop. Ask the children what they were expecting. Discuss storytelling. *What is a story? Who 'tells' stories? What kind of stories do you like best? Why do you think people like stories?* Write down their answers.
  - Talk about Jesus as a good storyteller who told some of the most well-known stories in the world, which are written down in the Bible. Explain that he used stories to teach people about God and how they should live.
  - Explain that over the next few weeks they are going to hear some of Jesus' stories, and will see how different writers and artists have retold them and illustrated them. Tell children that they will be compiling a class 'Big book' of stories Jesus told, with their own text and pictures, for year 1 children to use in their literacy hour.
  - Tell the children they are going to help you tell a story about two brothers and their father. Tell the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 in your own words, breaking after: verse 16, verse 18a (*and say to him...*), verse 20a (*his father saw him ...*), verse 27, verse 30. Invite the children to suggest what happened next after each break, *eg how people felt, what they said, what they did*. Explain that Jesus told his story to teach people important lessons. It is called a parable. Ask children what they think this story means.

- identify the characteristics of stories
- reflect on their experience of stories and storytelling
- suggest feelings and reactions of characters at key points in the story
- suggest possible meanings of the story

- Make a distinction between 'telling' and writing or reading stories so that you can convey the skill which Jesus had in 'telling' stories.
- Emphasise that everyone can be a storyteller, *eg when they tell their 'news' or talk about their day when they get home*.
- It is important to ensure that the RE focus is not lost – RE is a vehicle for the literacy skills in this unit, not the other way round.
- Children are not expected to identify theological meanings at this stage. They should be guided to identify key feelings and ideas in the story, notably, being sorry (repentance), forgiveness, reconciliation (making up), jealousy.

### JESUS THE STORYTELLER

- to respond sensitively to the values and concerns of others
  - to identify the key concepts and ideas in stories Jesus told
- Help the children to reconstruct the story from the last lesson with the aid of a storyboard. Divide the children into three groups, each taking the part of the younger son, the elder son or the father. Ask them to tell the story through writing, drawing or drama from the point of view of their character, paying particular attention to how their character 'feels' and how they react to the other characters.
  - Invite children to read their stories to the class and suggest how different characters have seen the same events.
  - Identify the key ideas in the story, *eg being sorry, forgiveness, reconciliation*.

- retell the story
- identify with a character in the story and tell the events from their point of view
- identify the key central feelings and response of each character

- Teachers may need to make writing frames for children at different levels of ability.

### UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF A STORY

- understand that Jesus was teaching about repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and jealousy in the story
  - make links between the story and the beliefs which underpin it
  - describe religious teaching in the story
  - identify in their own experience the feelings of the people in the story
- Review the key ideas in the story with the children: being sorry (repentance), forgiveness, reconciliation (making up), jealousy.
  - Prepare multiple choice questions for each idea, giving three explanations of what Jesus was teaching through 'his' story, *eg the boy showed he was sorry by: (a) going home, (b) feeding the pigs or (c) offering to become his father's servant*. Ask children to select the correct explanation.
  - Lead children in a discussion of a deeper meaning of the story if the father represented God (ie the younger son abandons God, repents and is reconciled). Emphasise that Jesus taught that no one is beyond God's forgiveness.
  - Invite children to talk about occasions when they have either fallen out with a friend or a member of the family, or been jealous of someone.
  - *What can we learn about God from the story? Why do you think that Christians call God 'Father'?*
  - Draw the work on the prodigal son together by talking about how stories can be a way of helping people to understand values.

- explain that in the story Jesus was teaching about repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and jealousy
- explain simply the religious meaning of the story
- identify times in their lives when they have quarrelled with someone close to them

- Repentance: draw attention to the point that the prodigal son did not simply say 'sorry', he made amends.

### MAKING A BOOK OF STORIES THAT JESUS TOLD

- about the content and meaning of a story told by Jesus
  - to work cooperatively with others
  - to select and sequence information
  - to use ICT to help present a story
- Divide children into groups of four or five. Tell them that each group will be working on a different story told by Jesus, putting it into a format to be included in the class 'Big book'. Allocate a different story to each group. Provide the groups with several versions of the story, *eg different translations of the Bible (Good News, New English, International) and retellings for children*. Include illustrations by different artists and illustrators.
  - Ask each group to appoint a reader and a scribe. Let the children read the story and then retell it; agreeing the sequence of events, agreeing who the key characters are and what they are like. Discuss what they think Jesus wanted people to learn about God from this story.
  - Think about illustrations for the 'Big book'. *What do you think of the ones done by professionals? Which parts do you want to illustrate and why?* Divide the tasks up within the group. Draft, and then redraft the text and match with the illustrations. Word process text using a large typeface for the 'Big book'.

- work with others to produce a version of a parable which shows knowledge and understanding of its content and meaning

- Suggestions for stories to use are:
  - the lost sheep and coin (Luke 15)
  - the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18)
  - houses on rock and sand (Luke 6)
  - the mustard seed (Luke 13)
- Teachers can use the varying length and complexity of the stories to determine the make-up of the groups.
- Explain that the Greek word for book is 'byblos', which has become 'Bible'.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

## POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

### REVIEW OF WORK IN PROGRESS

- to subject their work to critical appraisal from their peers
- to redraft their work
- to draw together what they have learnt about Jesus as a storyteller

- Structure this session to focus on feedback from the groups. Ask each group to tell their story, explain what they think Jesus wanted people to learn from it, and show what they have done so far towards the 'Big book'.
- Share any comments, insights and suggestions and encourage the children to rework stories where necessary.
- As a class, agree on a title for the 'Big book' and discuss what will go into the introduction.
- Use this part of the discussion to draw together what children have learnt about Jesus as a storyteller and what they think this shows about Jesus as a person.
- Ask questions to help the children explore the nature of the stories. *Are the stories about familiar things, situations or people? Are the stories easy to remember? Are the stories about something happening? Are the stories told to teach people about God?*
- Ask the children to make a list of the qualities of God that they think Christians might believe are illustrated in these parables. This could be done as a matching task, eg *God is like a caring shepherd, God is like a good housekeeper, God is like a forgiving father, God is like a firm foundation, God is like a sheltering tree*. Discuss with the children how they will convey these points in the introduction.
- Help the children plan other aspects of the production of their book, eg *cover, authors' and illustrators' names, contents page, publication details*.
- When the book is finished make a special occasion of presenting it to the year 1 class. Ask the children to take turns to read and talk about the different stories and pictures in the book, and explain what was involved in making it.

- reflect upon and discuss possible meanings of each story
- explain the nature of a parable
- give possible interpretations of parables of Jesus

- It may be necessary for teachers to act as a scribe for each group and note down critical points for reflection and redrafting.
- The time for this activity could be appropriately divided between RE, literacy and ICT lessons.
- Spend time talking about the characteristics of shepherds, farmers, builders etc. Children in rural areas may already have a good understanding of them. Stress that the people who listened to Jesus' stories would have been familiar with such aspects. Bible atlases and story books provide good illustrations of what life was like in the time of Jesus.
- This unit does not explore the teachings about the Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God which underlie these parables. At this stage, the focus is on the ways in which Jesus used stories to teach people about God and how to behave and treat each other.

## **FUTURE LEARNING**

Children could go on to:

- study the life and teachings of Jesus in greater depth